

REMARKS

I. Introduction

With the cancellation herein without prejudice of claim 15, claims 16 to 29 are pending in the present application. In view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, it is respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are allowable, and reconsideration is respectfully requested.

II. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants note with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter contained in claims 18 to 21, 23, 24, 26 and 27. In this regard, the Examiner will note that each of claims 18 to 20, 23, 24 and 26 has been rewritten herein in independent form to include all of the limitations of its respective base claim and any intervening claims. It is therefore respectfully submitted that claims 18 to 20, 23, 24 and 26 are in condition for immediate allowance.

Claim 21 depends from claim 18, and claim 27 depends from claim 26. It is therefore respectfully submitted that claims 21 and 27 are also in condition for immediate allowance.

Claims 16, 17, 22 and 25 have been amended herein without prejudice to depend from claim 18, and claim 28 now ultimately depends from claim 18. It is therefore respectfully submitted that claims 16, 17, 22, 25 and 28 are also in condition for immediate allowance.

III. Rejection of Claims 15 to 17, 22, 25, 28 and 29 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 15 to 17, 22, 25, 28 and 29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,469,215. While Applicants do not agree with the merits of this rejection, to facilitate matters, claim 15 has been canceled herein without prejudice, claim 16, 17, 22 and 25 have been amended herein without prejudice to depend from claim 18, which was indicated to include allowable subject matter, claim 28 now ultimately depends from claim 18, and claim 29 has been amended herein without prejudice to include limitations analogous to claim 18. It is therefore respectfully submitted that the present rejection is moot, and withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

IV. Conclusion

It is therefore respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are allowable. All issues raised by the Examiner having been addressed, an early and favorable action on the merits is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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